DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 833 FL 022 757

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TITLE Language Use in Two-Way Bilingual Programs.
INSTITUTION Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio, Tex.
REPORT NO ISSN-1069-5672
PUB DATE Feb 94
NOTE 5p.
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
JOURNAL CIT IDRA Newsletter; v21 n2 p1,9-11 Feb 1994

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bilingual Education; Bilingual Education Programs; Case Studies; *Classroom Communication; Educational Objectives; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); Ethnography; Language of Instruction; *Language Role; Language Usage; Mexican Americans; Middle Schools; *Native Language Instruction; Outcomes of Education; Program Effectiveness; Second Language Instruction; Second Languages; Spanish; *Spanish Speaking
IDENTIFIERS *Two Way Bilingual Education

ABSTRACT

The roles of first and second languages were studied, using ethnographic methods, in a middle school two-way bilingual education program that served Mexican-background students. The primary stated program goal was to develop bilingualism and biliteracy in both minority and majority language students. Classes were taught using English and Spanish on alternate days. The study focused on a core group of 21 Hispanic and 8 white students from working-class backgrounds. It was found that for academic purposes, the Hispanic students used English almost exclusively, and this is attributed to inattention to subtle aspects of program policy and a hidden curriculum. These included announcements made in English first, then Spanish, and the daily requirement that students learn an English vocabulary word but not a Spanish one. Student perceptions of the relative importance of English-medium and Spanish-medium tests were influenced by both the way in which students were prepared for them and the way the tests were administered. It was also found that instructional practices unwittingly devalued language-minority students' linguistic and cultural capital, through use of "high" rather than vernacular Spanish. It is concluded that despite good intentions, inattention to policy and practices can have unintended results, and that success through bilingualism and biliteracy is built on well-conceptualized and carefully monitored bilingual programs that give equal emphasis to minority languages and English. Contains 26 references. (MSE)

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INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

ED 378 833

IDRA Newsletter

IDRA Focus: Bilingual Education

ISSN 1069-5672 Volume XXI, No. 2 Feb. 1994

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Language Use in Two-Way Bilingual Programs

Pam McCollum, Ph.D.

IDRA is an independent nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to improving educational opportunity. Through research, materials development, training, technical assistance, evaluation, and information dissemination, we're helping to create schools that work for all children.

Interest in the potential of two-way bilingual programs has increased in recent years. In general, they are seen as an attractive alternative to transitional programs that exclusively target language minority students and discontinue native language instruction as soon as participation in all-English classes becomes possible. In contrast, two-way programs, also known as developmental bilingual education programs, seek to promote bilingualism and biliteracy in English and in a second language for *all* students. Outside the purely linguistic realm, two-way programs can also promote cross-cultural understanding between students from different linguistic communities and increase educational access.

Briefly, two-way programs are characterized by the following: classes are composed of both language minority and majority group students; instruction is provided in English and a minority language; programs span four to six years; and classes fall into one of three categories: (a) language arts for native speakers, (b) ESL and second language (L_2) instruction for nonnative speakers, and (c) content area instruction in English and the L_2.

Two-way bilingual programs have the potential to promote English acquisition and maintenance of heritage languages in language minority students while at the same time fostering much needed bilingual skills in majority group students. Imposing the structure of a two-way program, however, does not guarantee students will view both languages equally or will use them as intended for instruction.

My observations here are based on an ethnographic study I conducted that followed a group of Mexican-background students through three years in a middle school bilingual program to examine their views on schooling. This study followed qualitative methods and was done within an interpretive framework as defined by Erickson (1986). Mexican-background students were defined as: (1) arrivals from Mexico; or (2) students who were born in the United States and consider themselves to be Chicano, Mexican American, or Mexican. The study was conducted in a middle school in a large metropolitan area in the southwest.

Two theoretical frameworks are used to interpret the results in this analysis. The first is a cultural capital explanation of inequality that details how nonmainstream forms of knowledge are devalued in schools (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and the second is a sociolinguistic analysis of the effect of bilingual program policy on language use and shift (Kjolseth, 1982). A cultural capital explanation of inequality says that schools and other symbolic institutions contribute to the reproduction of inequality through curricula that reward the "cultural capital" of mainstream groups while devaluing working class or nonmainstream forms of knowledge.

The work of Kjolseth (1982) on bilingual program policy explains how language minority students' linguistic cultural capital can be devalued by the school. Kjolseth points out that a shift to English is the linguistic consequence of maintenance pro-

Language Use - continued on page 9

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Language Use - continued from page 1

gram policy that mandates a "high" form of the native language for instruction. Students who speak vernacular forms of the native language tend to shift to their second language where their sensibilities about changes in register and style variation are less well developed. Kjolseth argues that such programs are assimilative in nature and promote language shift. The features of such "assimilation maintenance" programs are the following: (1) the program originates from non-ethnic or supra-ethnic interests; (2) members of the language minority community are not involved in the program's decision making bodies; (3) teachers generally do not live in the community nor are they members of the language minority community; and (4) traditional curricula and forms of assessment are duplicated in the minority language.

In this article, I will discuss how inattention to program policy and the hidden curriculum in one middle school two-way bilingual program unwittingly led Hispanic adolescents to choose not to speak their native language at school (McCollum 1992, 1993). A full discussion of the interrelationship of the factors that caused these students to speak English at school is impossible within the scope of this article but two major factors - inattention to program policy and the hidden curriculum - will be discussed. First, I will describe the two-way program, its participants and factors that led these the Mexican-background students to speak English in a program designed to promote the maintenance of their native language and the acquisition of English.

The Two-Way Bilingual Program

The primary program goal in the two-way bilingual program studied was to develop bilingualism and biliteracy in both minority and majority group students. All classes were taught using an "alternate days" approach to distribute Spanish and English throughout the curriculum. The one exception: Spanish as a second language was taught for students with English as a primary language, while Spanish Language Arts was offered for native Spanish speakers. The analysis of student language use is based on interviews that were conducted with the focal students and their teachers from 1989-1992 and from fieldnotes of classroom observations that were done in three instructional settings: Spanish language arts, science, and first year Spanish as a second language classes. In addition, students' interactional patterns that occurred outside class with peers and teachers were also recorded in fieldnotes.

The program was an experiment by the district to promote additive bilingualism (acquisition of an L_2 accompanied by continued development of the L_1) in both majority and minority group children. As such, it received direct and frequent assistance from the district's bilingual director and staff. Issues such as programming, the distribution of languages throughout the curriculum, the procurement of bilingual instructional materials, and inservice training for teachers received more attention than did other bilingual programs in the district targeting only language minority populations. In general, the school seemed to posess most of the elements necessary for providing a supportive environment conducive to additive bilingualism on the part of both Hispanic and White students.

DO SUCH THINGS AS TESTING POLICY AND USE OF THE MINORITY LANGUAGE RELATIVE TO ENGLISH COMMUNICATE THAT ENGLISH IS THE LANGUAGE OF POWER WITHIN THE SCHOOL DOMAIN? BILINGUAL PROGRAM POLICY CAN PROMOTE ACQUISITION OF MINORITY LANGUAGES WHILE AT THE SAME TIME UNDERMINING THEIR USE...

The student body (77% Hispanic in origin) and faculty were divided into seven teams, following a traditional middle school format. Of the seven teams, only one elected to follow a bilingual program of study. The bilingual curriculum consisted of the regular course of study (math, science, social studies, art and physical education), but included Spanish language arts for the native Spanish speakers and Spanish as a second language for the White students.

Students were not tracked by language proficiency or academic skill levels, rather they were grouped in classes heterogeneously. As a consequence, the whole spectrum of language proficiency levels could be present in one class. Spanish and English were distributed evenly throughout the curriculum. On Mondays and Wednesdays instruction in content area subjects was in Spanish; on Tuesdays and Thursdays it alternated to English; and on Fridays, either language was permissible. The rationale for such an approach is that on any given day, a portion of the class will study in the stronger of its two languages, assuring comprehension of academic content. Grouping monolingual and bilingual students at tables in content area subjects theoretically assured that there is always someone present capable of helping those receiving instruction in their weaker language.

In the first year of this study, the focal group of students was composed of twenty-nine pupils, twenty-one of Hispanic origin and eight Whites. Students came from a working class socioeconomic background; their parents were primarily employed in minimum wage or blue collar jobs such as factory work, food preparation, construction, or auto repair. All the focal children qualified for the school's free lunch program, generally an indicator of low socioeconomic status.

The Mexican-background students and/or their families came from the states of Chihuahua and Durango and spoke a working class variety of Spanish that is characteristic of that area of Northern Mexico. All but two entered school speaking Spanish as their primary language and learned English in the classroom. Seven students in the group were born in the United States but grew up speaking Spanish as their first language. Two others were monolingual Spanish speakers. Of the U.S.- born students, two were monolingual English speakers learning Spanish as a second language.

White students were selected for the program from a pool of students who had participated in bilingual programs throughout the city during elementary school. Student interviews showed that the quality and extent of their bilingual experience in elementary school varied greatly. Regardless of their length of tenure in elementary bilingual programs, all the White students exhibited low levels of Spanish oral proficiency. On the other hand, all of the Hispanic students, except three relatively new arrivals from Mexico, had well-developed English oral language skills. In interviews conducted in the sixth grade, both groups of students revealed very positive attitudes

Language Use - continued on page 10

Language Use - continued from page 9

about school and the value of bilingualism and expressed high future job aspirations (McCollum, 1992).

Explanations for Students' Language Use Choices

Why, then, given their positive stance regarding bilingualism, did the Hispanic students almost exclusively use English for academic purposes at school? The answer lies in an examination of the interplay of program policy and subtle contextual variables at work in the school. Inattention to subtle aspects of program policy and the hidden curriculum taught students English was the language of power. Moreover, requiring a "high" form of Spanish for instruction taught students to devalue their own linguistic cultural capital and caused them to switch to English.

At the surface level, efforts were made by the faculty and administration to increase awareness of Spanish and the bilingual program within the school. For example, in the entryway of the school was a large banner: "*Bienvenidos a nuestra* Middle School." In addition, examples of students' work in Spanish decorated the wall of the hallways.

Closer examination, however, showed other more subtle features worked to mark the school as an English domain. For example, while daily announcements were given in both English and Spanish, the English segment always preceded the one in Spanish. Furthermore, each day's announcements ended with the assignment of an English vocabulary word that students were to learn the meaning and usage of by the end of the day. Although the student body was overwhelmingly Hispanic in origin, a Spanish vocabulary word was never assigned.

Stronger clues regarding linguistic power relations in the school were contained in practices surrounding the end of the year external assessments done with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in English and *La Prueba* Riverside in Spanish. In interviews, students stated that the ITBS had to count more than *La Prueba* because it was in English. They also felt that performance on the ITBS determined whether one would pass to the following grade. For example one Hispanic boy revealed, "The *Iowa Test* determines if you pass the year, not *La Prueba*. [ITBS] is important because it goes to the State."

Students' perceptions about the relative importance of the two tests resulted mainly from how they were administered. The administration of the ITBS was preceded by a flurry of preparation. Months before its administration, teachers interjected comments into instruction concerning the importance of particular teaching points because they might appear on "the *Iowa*." The week prior to the test, such advice increased significantly and the importance of attending school during the week of the test was stressed. The atmosphere was one of anticipation and anxiety for both students and teachers. Teachers made enticements to students to insure attendance. For example, one teacher rewarded those who attended and were on time with a candy bar at the end of each day's testing. Every morning was devoted to testing the week the ITBS was administered. In the afternoons, instruction was suspended while students recuperated from their morning travails by watching videotapes supplied by teachers who busily filed, catalogued and dispatched that morning's tests to the main office.

In comparison, *La Prueba* was given almost as an after thought. As the test is much shorter than the ITBS and was only given to the bilingual team, classes were not rescheduled. Nor was the test given at a uniform time; each home room teacher administered it whenever possible. In contrast to the ITBS, students were not alerted during instruction about the possible occurrence of items appearing on the test.

Ironically, student perceptions about the relative importance of the ITBS and *La Prueba* were borne out by a change in program policy in the second year of the program. On the basis of the eight White students' low ITBS achievement scores, instruction in the bilingual program was changed drastically. Teachers were directed to teach students in the language they understood best and content area subjects were no longer taught by alternating Spanish and English. Concurrent translation (the repetition of what is said in one language immediately in the other) frequently occurred to clear up points for the Spanish-dominant speakers. The program's original two-way structure that promoted the maintenance of Spanish was abandoned due to the White students' performance on the English language achievement test.

Language Use in the Classroom

Embedded within a school environment that conveyed that English was the language of power were instructional practices that further devalued language minority students' linguistic cultural capital. The Spanish language arts teacher modeled and taught the "high" form of Spanish she required during instruction. She regularly corrected lexical, phonological and syntactic features of students' speech as they contributed to lessons that required analyzing language rather than using it for communication. Often her corrections were accompanied by comments that devalued students' vernacular Spanish. For example, comments such as the following were commonplace. "*No se usa 'asina.' La forma educada es 'así.'*" ("*Asina*" is not used. The educated form is "*así.*") Other archaic words that have fallen into disuse in other varieties of Spanish such as *nadien* (*nadie*) and *vide* (*ví*) were also regularly corrected. Many times, after the teacher followed her corrections with comments that devalued their variety of Spanish, students showed signs of incomprehensibility and refused to speak further in Spanish.

Student body language and asides to each other showed they did not understand why their variety of Spanish was not good enough for the classroom. Equally incomprehensible to them was why their fluent communication in the vernacular was criticized while their White peers were lauded in content area subjects for even attempting to produce isolated vocabulary words. They did not understand why their form of Spanish was unacceptable in the classroom and switched to English in order to avoid being corrected. Kjolseth (1982) posits the result of the imposition of "high" varieties of the minority language for instruction in maintenance bilingual programs with such an effect; he also sees such behavior as the first stage in language shift to the majority language.

Examining the Broader Picture

The middle school two-way bilingual program studied was instituted to promote bilingualism and biliteracy for minority and majority group students. Asymmetrical power relations within the school and elements of the hidden curriculum, however, taught language minority students to value English over their native language. Students learned through both structural and cultural elements in the school that English was the language of power. Furthermore, they also saw their linguistic cultural capital - a working class variety of Spanish - devalued during Spanish language

Language Use - continued on page 11

Language Use - continued from page 10
arts where a "high" form of Spanish was imposed as the medium of instruction. Not having access to the "high" variety of their native language, they switched to English where their sensibilities to the nuances of language variation were less well developed.

What does this research study have to say to others who are currently involved in or possibly considering implementing a two-way bilingual program? First, and perhaps most importantly, it shows that faith in the reliability of stated outcomes of a particular bilingual program model (maintenance versus transitional) is misplaced. While most are in agreement that goals of two-way maintenance bilingual programs are preferred to those of early exit transitional programs, this research demonstrates that inattention to educational policies and practices within maintenance programs can have unintended results.

The issue of the language policy to be implemented around teaching the minority language must also be addressed prior to implementing a program. Faculty and staff need to come to a consensus regarding the place of students' particular variety of the minority language during instruction. What is needed is a policy that not only permits the vernacular in the classroom but uses it to develop a fuller range of communicative abilities in the L_1.

If one were to do a contrastive analysis of the language variety spoken by the students in this study and the "high" form imposed by their teacher, one would find the greatest divergence in the area of vocabulary where two main types of contrast occur. In the first, regional dialect differences account for the use of different vocabulary items. In the second, English words are borrowed and tailored to fit the conventions of Spanish. For example, students used the word "*elevador*" (instead of the preferred "*ascensor*") for "elevator." As this example shows, such differences do not cause the speaker to be misunderstood. Similarly, at the level of syntax, the use of vernacular verb forms such as "*Me lo trujo*" instead of "*Me lo trajo*" does not cause comprehension problems; the meaning is easily construed through the context.

Certainly such minimal differences do not justify erecting linguistic borders that cause language minority students to avoid using their native language at school. Linguistic purists would do well to remember that language minority students come to school with a level of linguistic proficiency in their native language that few majority group members will ever achieve. It seems a more productive avenue for the program language policy to be one that allows the use of local vernacular as a base for expanding students' communicative abilities across a range of language styles and registers.

Another issue relevant to this discussion is that the middle school's Spanish language arts teacher was formerly a member of the same linguistic community as her students. She successfully progressed through the same school system and went on to graduate from college as a high school Spanish teacher. Through schooling, she also learned to devalue the vernacular variety she brought to school. In interviews, she stated she felt that for her students to be successful it was necessary for them to stop using their native variety of Spanish. Taken in this light, the use of a "high" variety of Spanish in the classroom was well-meaning but certainly misguided.

The Hispanic students in her class were, for the most part, all very proficient in Spanish and English. Many of them enjoyed doing creative writing in Spanish in their spare time. Their stories, poems, and plays were all written in Spanish and demonstrated they knew a great deal about effectively expressing their ideas and feelings in print. Observation of those same students in the Spanish language arts class, however, revealed they not only switched to English when their usual ways of speaking were challenged, but they also resisted participating in the class due to its emphasis on analyzing elements of Spanish rather than using the language for communication.

Teaching methods that emphasized the classification and analysis of Spanish led students to question why they were taking the class. For example in an interview one Hispanic student asked, "Miss, why do we have to learn all these rules about verbs and things? I already write good stories, but I don't understand the rules."

Instead of fostering bilingualism and biliteracy in Spanish and English, the two-way program studied unwittingly devalued the minority language and taught students that English was the language of power. As a consequence, students used mainstream linguistic cultural capital to match the school's hidden curriculum that stipulated learning in English took precedence over all else. Furthermore, students resisted writing in their L_1 due to the teacher's emphasis on the mastery of the formal elements of language in written exercises.

A final issue raised by this research is the importance of analyzing program contextual variables. Do such things as testing policy and use of the minority language relative to English communicate that English is the language of power within the school domain? Bilingual program policy can promote acquisition of minority languages while at the same time undermining their use through practices that send the clear message: "English equals success." For language minority students, learning English does equal success but only if that success has not been achieved at the expense of the minority language. In our increasingly linguistically diverse and economically interrelated society, bilingualism and biliteracy will pave the road to success. The most direct route is through well conceptualized and carefully monitored bilingual programs that give equal emphasis to minority languages and English.

Resources

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